

# **ALNWICK URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.**

## **MEDICAL OFFICER'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1920.**

Gentlemen :—

The accompanying report is arranged and presented to you according to suggestions contained in a memorandum received from the Ministry of Health.

### **Natural and Social Conditions of the District.**

**The Estimated Population** of the district for the year is 6,784 as compared with 6,796 for 1919, and 7,041 for the Census of 1911. No great variation in the population occurs from year to year, which is only to be expected in a place where no new works or industries are established, and the existing occupations are of a fairly stable and unvarying nature. Agricultural work, shop-keeping, mining, and quarrying are the chief occupations, and these do not exert any particular influence on the health of the community.

### **Physical Features and General Character of District.**

The town's site is of a hilly nature affording facilities for self-cleansing gradients to the main sewerage and private drainage. Most of the houses are constructed of the local sandstone. To the west lies the higher ground of Alnwick Moor on which are erected a number of detached and semi-detached cottages included in the Urban District.

### **Vital Statistics.**

The total deaths for the year numbered 116 and of these 48 were males and 68 females. Taking the population at 6,784, the death rate equals 17.09 per thousand.

Death Rate 1920	—	17.09
Death Rate 1919	—	17.62
Death Rate 1918	—	17.65
Average Death Rate for 3 years	—	17.75

It is satisfactory to note that the death rate for 1920 is less than that for 1919 and also below the average for the last three years. The following are the causes of death :—

Pneumonia	...	...	16	Violence	...	...	4
Bronchitis	...	...	4	Cancer	...	...	9
Other Respiratory Diseases	1			Appendicitis	...	..	1
Pulmonary Tuberculosis	6			Meningitis	...	..	1
Other Tubercular Diseases	3			Parturition	...	..	2
Infantile Diarrhoea	3			Puerperal Fever	...	..	1
Congenital Debility	5			Organic Heart Disease	8		
Kidney Disease	4			Other Defined Diseases	46		
Causes illdefined or unknown				...	2		

No deaths were caused by Diphtheria, Scarlet Fever or Typhoid Fever, but there was one death from Cerebro-spinal Meningitis (Spotted Fever).

The total birth numbered 166 and of these 88 were males and 78 were females, three of the males and one of the females being illegitimate. The birth rate for 1920 is therefore 24.47 per thousand.

Birth Rate 1920	-	24.47
Birth Rate 1919	-	23.83
Birth Rate 1918	-	17.30
Average Birth Rate for 3 years	-	21.86

From the above you will notice that the 1920 birth rate is above that for 1919, and also above the average for the last three years. The illegitimate births—4 in number—are a great improvement on 1919 when 18 were registered, and 1918 when there were 15. This improvement is probably due to the closure of the military camps towards the end of 1919.

**Infantile Deaths.** The deaths in infants under one year of age numbered 13 and as the total births were 166 the infant mortality rate works out at 78.43 per thousand births.

Infantile Death Rate 1920	-	78.43
Infantile Death Rate 1919	-	95.67
Infantile Death Rate 1918	-	68.49

Average Infantile Death Rate for 3 years	-	80.86
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It is satisfactory that the Infantile Death Rate is lower than that of last year, and also below the average of the last three years. It also compares favourably with the average for England and Wales for 1920 which is 80.00 per thousand births. At the same time I regret to note that there were three deaths caused by infantile diarrhoea, and this in a year which was practically devoid of any really hot summer weather.

Considerable overcrowding still exists in the town, but when the new houses—now in course of erection—are ready for occupation, this will be much relieved.

### Hospitals and Poor Law Relief.

A Workhouse with Infirmary attached, also a General Infirmary constitute the hospitals in the town, and in my opinion are adequate to its needs. A joint small-pox hospital is also provided, but no case of this disease has ever been admitted there.

### Sanitary Circumstances of the District.

**Water.** The Urban District is supplied from 3 sources (1) The Freemen's supply for the Moor (2), Gravitating main from Rugley (3), Pumped supply from the Parks.

The supply to the houses on the Moor belongs to the Freemen of Alnwick, whilst the two other supplies belong to the Urban Council. All are on the constant system, and the water is of good quality, varying from 9 to 12 degrees of hardness. The Town Mains are divided into High and Low Service Sections.

The Low Service Section is supplied by the gravitating main

from the Rugley district, the average yield being about 80 gallons per minute of spring water. After passing thro' the filter bed the water enters the low service reservoir, which holds 210,000 gallons. These works were constructed in 1854.

The High Service Section is supplied from a spring in the Parks near Hulne Abbey yielding on an average 80 gallons per minute. The water gravitates to the electric pumps in Walkergate from which it is pumped to the High Service reservoir holding 97,000 gallons. This scheme was constructed in 1913 and put into operation in 1914.

Originally the whole of the town was supplied by 23 springs in the Rugley district, but owing to 20 of these springs being shallow and liable to contamination, these 20 were condemned and cut off from the supply when the High Service scheme came into operation, the idea being that the new High supply would augment the Low Service and make up the deficiency and at the same time give a better pressure to the houses in the higher parts of the town.

These expectations—I am sorry to say—have not been realised, as a shortage of water still occurs and assistance has had to be obtained from the Alnwick Castle private water supply during the summer and early autumn months.

On the advice of Messrs Taylor and Wallin—the engineers who carried out the augmented scheme—two Deacon Water Waste Detection Meters have been fixed, and night tests made. The charts showed a night flow of 6,500 gallons per hour in the Low Service and 1,000 gallons per hour in the High Service. The total consumption for 24 hours is therefore 44 and 42 gallons per head respectively. The engineers point out that their scheme was designed for a normal consumption of 30 gallons per head, and that the shortage of water is due to excessive waste caused no doubt by faulty fittings.

The Urban Council have taken this matter in hand and are having the town systematically inspected for preventing the waste. They are also considering a scheme by which a supply from the Rugley Culvert Spring could be brought in by gravitation. This spring yields an average of 45 gallons per minute.

### Rivers and Streams.

The River Aln passes by on the north side of the town, and there is no pollution from the Urban District.

### Drainage and Sewerage.

The town is served on the partly combined system, there being surface water culverts in some parts which take the surface waste from the streets. The main sewers and drains have good self-cleaning gradients. The sewage goes by gravitation to the Sewage Disposal Works at Heleystide, situated about one mile below the town.

Part of the town (Canongate and Walkergate) is at a low level, and the sewage from this district is collected at the Sewage

Ejector Station, from which it is delivered into the gravitating main sewers.

The Sewage Disposal works are 8 acres in extent and consist of open settling tanks in duplicate and 5 acres of sand and gravel beds. The effluent is discharged into the River Aln and no complaints were received during the year, either as to the effluent or emanations from these works.

### **Closet Accommodation.**

Practically the whole of the Urban District has the water carriage system. There are no privies or cesspools.

### **Scavenging.**

The bi-weekly ashbox system of house refuse collection continues in satisfactory operation, the work being done by the Council's own men, horses and carts. The refuse is carted to the refuse depots on the Moor. A considerable quantity of refuse is deposited in the ash boxes which can quite well be destroyed by burning by the householders and this would help the work of this department.

### **Sanitary Inspection of District.**

Particulars will be found in the report of the Inspector of Nuisances appended.

Number of Inspections	-	423
Number of informal notices served	-	209
Number of Nuisances abated	-	197

### **Lodging Houses.**

There is only one Common Lodging House situated in Pottergate and this has been periodically inspected.

### **Slaughter Houses.**

There are no private slaughter houses in the town. A public Abattoir consisting of ten slaughter houses is owned by the Urban Council.

### **Cattle Market.**

The Market is owned and controlled by the Urban Council. The sales are principally run by the Alnwick Auction Mart Co., and the market is thoroughly washed down after every sale.

### **Bakeries.**

These are five in number. The improvements to the principle one in Greenwell Lane are now completed.

### **Dairies and Cowsheds.**

There are 28 cowkeepers and one dairy.

### Schools.

The sanitary condition of the schools is satisfactory. No closure of schools for infectious disease was considered necessary during the year.

### FOOD.

#### Milk.

The general character of the milk supplied in the district is good and no complaints concerning it have been received. Expectant and nursing mothers and women with small children can obtain sufficient milk on application to the Medical Officer.

#### Meat.

As stated previously, there is a public abattoir, and this was inspected on several occasions generally when slaughtering was being done. No unsound meat or unhealthy animals have required to be dealt with here. It has been necessary on occasion to speak of the tenants about leaving offal lying about. A complaint of imported meat gone bad was dealt with informally.

#### Other Foods.

Two cases of Government Butter were examined and found unsound and were dealt with informally.

### Prevalence of and Control over Infectious Disease.

During the year seventeen cases of infectious disease were notified, made up as follows:—

Scarlet Fever	2	Cerebo-spinal Meningitis	1
Diphtheria	10	Puerperal Fever	1
		Pulmonary Tuberculosis	3.

Of the Scarlet Fever cases one was admitted to the Isolation Hospital and one was treated at home. Both cases recovered.

Of the Diphtheria cases, all were of a mild type and treated at their respective homes. Besides the cases notified, there was a number of cases of bad throats at the beginning of the year which, in my opinion, were probably of a diphtheritic nature. No deaths occurred from this disease and anti-diphtheritic serum is supplied free to all necessitous cases.

Of the cases of Pulmonary Tuberculosis, one is at present in a Sanatorium and two died.

The case of Cerebro-spinal Meningitis was admitted into the Isolation Hospital and died there. All cases of infectious disease are visited by the Medical Officer of Health and arrangements are made for disinfection, etc., when necessary.

Compared with 144 cases of infectious disease notified in 1919 the number 17 for 1920 is very small, but this is partly accounted for by the fact that measles is no longer a notifiable disease. There has however been no measles epidemic during the year. In addition to notifiable diseases, there was an epidemic of influenza in April which was not of a severe type. Many persons availed themselves of the influenza vaccine provided.

Bacteriological aids to diagnosis are considerably utilised.

No primary or re-vaccinations were performed by the Medical Officer of Health under the Public Health (Small-pox Prevention) Regulations, 1917. No action has been taken by the Council with regard to Venereal Disease.

### **Maternity and Child Welfare.**

The Maternity and Child Welfare Centre is open one day a week and continues to be well attended. Progress in this branch has been very satisfactory. One case of Puerperal Fever was notified during the year, but there have been no cases of Ophthalmia Neonatorum.

### **Sanitary Administration.**

The Staff consists of one Inspector of Nuisances who carries out the usual inspections required under the Public Health and Housing Acts.

**The Infectious Disease Hospital** is situated in the Wagon Way and contains three beds and three cots in both male and female wards. It was in use on eight occasions during the year for cases of Diphtheria, Scarlet Fever and Spotted Fever. The caretaker lives on the premises and nurses single cases under the direction of the M.O.H. When cases of more than one disease are in the hospital an extra nurse is engaged.

**The Joint Small Pox Hospital** is situated about 3 miles from Alnwick. The farmer on whose land the hospital stands, looks after the place; but the Joint Committee have under consideration the appointment of a resident caretaker.

**The Public Mortuary.** This is situated in Green Bat.

### **Housing.**

**General Housing Conditions.** There is a great demand for housing in the town. The Urban Council own 72 houses in King Street and Lisburn Street, and when any are to let there are over 100 applicants. In the return of Housing needs which was sent to the Ministry of Health last year it was estimated that 150 houses were needed.

The Council have on hand an important housing scheme comprising 118 houses, of which 18 are in respect of the condemned "Area No. 2." The plans have been approved. Tenders were obtained for the whole scheme comprising the 118 houses, roads, and sewers, but owing to the present high cost of building the Housing Commissioner has allowed the Council to proceed with only 36 of the houses. No doubt when prices come down the whole scheme will be carried out as intended. A commencement has been made with the building of the 36 houses.

Six army huts were converted into houses during the year and erected in the Urban District. Another is in course of erection.

Two Collieries about 4 miles from Alnwick are building houses for their workmen, and as a number of the men employed at these

collieries live in Alnwick, this, together with the Council's Housing Scheme will no doubt improve the existing conditions.

**Fitness of Houses.** With the exception of the houses mentioned in the return and marked on the plan sent to the Ministry of Health, the general standard of housing is good. The defects found in the unfit houses were dampness, delapidated beyond repair, and congested.

No general action has been taken under the Public Health or Housing Acts as regards unfit houses on account of the impossibility at the present time of finding the tenant's other accommodation.

No special action was taken as regards carrying out repairs. When notices were served for minor repairs the owners did the necessary work. Each house has a water supply and sanitary accommodation.

### Housing Conditions Statistics.

#### General.

Number of Dwelling Houses -	1683
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Number of New Working Class Houses -	6
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#### Unfit Houses.

Number of houses inspected -	729
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Number of houses recorded -	624
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Number of houses unfit -	1
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Number of houses not fit in every respect -	126
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Remedy of Defects -	Nil.
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Action Under Statutory Powers -	Nil.
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#### Under Public Health Acts.

Number of houses where Notices served -	105
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Number of Defects remedied by Owners -	93
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In conclusion I am pleased to say that the general health of the town for the past year has been quite satisfactory. Owing to the fact that a new Inspector of Nuisances was appointed at the end of May, I append the reports of Mr Wilson and Mr Robson, the first report being from January 1st to May 31st, and the second report being from June 1st to December 31st. At the same time I must acknowledge my thanks to both of these for help in obtaining some of the information in this report.

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours Obediently,

**B. TREVOR-ROPER, M.B., M.R.C.S., M.O.H.**

Urban District Council Offices, Green Batt,  
Alnwick, 3rd January, 1921.

**TO THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.**

REPORT OF MR GEOFFREY WILSON, as Inspector of Nuisances for the period from 1st of January to the 31st May, 1920.

Dear Sir,—I herewith beg to submit to you the following particulars respecting my work in connection with the Sanitary Inspection Department during the first portion of the year 1920, as recorded by me, up to my supersession in Office on 17th (31st) May 1920, by Mr John Temple Robson as Inspector of Nuisances who may supply the particulars of the sanitary work effected during the remainder of the year.—I am, Sir, Your faithfully,

**GEOFFREY WILSON, Surveyor.**

As Inspector of Nuisances for the period.

The total number of Inspections for the five months amounted to 168, and resulted in the abatement of 124 Nuisances.

No. of Cases of Infectious Disease to which official attention was given	...	...	...	15
No. of Cases removed to Isolation Hospital at Wagon Way comprising Diphtheria (1), Scarlatina (4), and Spotted Fever (2), one of which proved fatal.				7
No. Isolated or maintained under official supervision at home (Allan, Scott, Hedley, Prudhoe St., Douglas, Nurse.)				6
No. of Houses Disinfected, where infectious cases occurred				13
No. of Rooms Fumigated by Inspector	...	...	...	22
Drainage smoke tested or otherwise examined	...	...	...	2
Cases of Stopped Drainage set clear	...	...	...	27
Cases of stopped-up Water Closets	...	...	...	38
Cases of deficient Water Supply to W.C.'s, restored or improved	...	...	...	10
Old collections of Refuse removed from Cellars, etc.	...			4
Throwing out of slops and house refuse in street	...			8
Unsanitary Houses, Inspections (Verminous 1)	...			5
Model Lodging House, visits and Inspections	...			3
Defective Rain Spouting	...	...	...	3
Mortuary Case	...	...	...	Nil.

Unsound Meat ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	Nil.
Schools and Convent ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	5
Cowsheds and Dairies ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	kept under	
Public Slaughter Houses (None Private)							observation in the	
Cattle Market ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	usual manner.	

**"Re" Housing Needs.**—Camp "A" Hutments inspected by Committee on January 6th, 1920. Plans passed for 3 wooden Hutment Houses on Alnwick Moor. Minor Plans for Hope Villa Green House. Motor garage at "Oakleigh," Swansfield Park Road. Ditto at Back Prudhoe Street, for Col. Geo. Reavell. New Kitchen behind No. 10 Bondgate Without (Dr. Scott Purves). Wash House in back yard at Hotspur Street (Mrs Rennison), New Stabling, etc., for Mr Wm. Glass in yard behind Plough Hotel.

Plans passed in July and August, 1919, for Petrol Store and Depot on South Road; constructed by 4th May, 1920.

Licenses for Storage of Petrol and Carbide of Calcium were re-issued during the year by the Clerk.

Sanitary Inspector's Association Conference at Newcastle-on-Tyne attended (by G.W.)

Blockage of long suggested New Road or Street (to lead to Swansfield Park Road and New Housing Lay-out) by Ford's New Garage Building at Wagon Way Road. Existing 9 inch main sewerage pipe disused and a 15 inch main sewerage substituted on a different line. (By J.T.R.)

#### **Town Water Supply.**

Deacon Waste Water Detection Meters; 6 inch Meter on larger Service Main installed Dec. 9th—10th, and 4 inch Meter upon 4 inch High Service Main, installed Dec. 17th—18th, 1919, during January and February, 1920, led to detection of a continuous wastage of from 5,000 to 7,000 gallons per hour through the dead of night and therefore for 24 hours also daily.

From cuttings and examinations of the Town Service Mains it has been ascertained that they are considerably furred up and reduced in diameter internally.

**GEOFFREY WILSON,**

"Consultant" Surveyor and Engineer.

To Dr. Trevor Roper, Urban Medical Officer of Health, Alnwick,  
3rd January, 1921.

Urban Council Offices, Alnwick, March, 1921.

**TO THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.**

Dear Sir,—I beg to submit to you a summary of my work as Inspector of Nuisances for the last seven months of the year. These particulars are all recorded by me in the "Inspector's Journal."

The summary is a copy of the return which has been sent to the County M.O.H.

Particulars.	Inspections Made.	Defects Found.	Defects Remedied.
Structural defects ... ...	14	6	3
Nuisances ... ...	5	2	2
Defective Spouting ... ..	16	7	3
Dampness ... ... ..	11	9	5
Insufficient Water Supply ..	7	7	7
Foul Drainage ... ... ..	34	16	16
Dilapidated Drainage ... ..	8	5	5
Defective W.C.'s. ... ...	26	9	9
Insufficient W.C.'s. ... ...	3	2	1
Foul W.C.'s. ... ... ..	39	27	27
Dairies and Cowsheds ..	5	—	—
Slaughter Houses ... ...	21	10	10
Common Lodging Houses ...	6	—	—
Bakehouses ... ... ..	6	—	—
Other Workshops ... ... ..	3	1	1
Animals Improperly Kept ...	2	1	1
Paving of Yards ... ... ..	2	2	2
Other Nuisances .. ...	10	8	8
Totals ... ...	218	112	100

37 other inspections were made, so that the total inspections amount to 255.

### **Rats and Mice (Destruction) Act, 1919.**

The refuse depôts on the Moor have twice been visited and rats destroyed, also 7 complaints were received of houses being rat infested and 6 of these have been dealt with satisfactorily.

Under the above Act very important duties are now imposed upon the public; it is the duty of occupiers of land and buildings to destroy rats and mice, and to prevent the premises becoming infested.

Any person failing to take such action as above is liable to a penalty of £5 and where he has been served with a notice from the Local Authority requiring him to take action; he is in default liable to a penalty of £20. The Local Authority may themselves enter the premises and do what is necessary to destroy rats and mice, and charge the occupier with the cost.

### **Disinfection.**

4 houses have been disinfected after cases of infectious disease.

### **Hospital.**

1 case (Scarlet Fever) was admitted to the isolation Hospital at Waggon Way, and the Hospital was stoved after the discharge of the patient.

The new caretaker (Mrs Hudson) took up her duties on the 13th August, 1920.

### **Sanitary Inspection of Theatres, etc.**

The 2 places of amusement in the Town, the "Corn Exchange" and the "King's Hall" have been inspected and were found in a sanitary condition.

### **New Drainage.**

Improvements have been carried out to 5 drainage systems, the then existing drains being composed of unglazed pipes which were badly laid and not jointed, these were taken out and new drains laid of proper sanitary glazed pipes and inspection chambers provided.

### **Factory and Workshops.**

In one case it was found that there was not separate sanitary accommodation for both sexes, so that notice had to be served on the owners who have carried out the necessary requirements.

### **Public Slaughter Houses.**

The attention of the occupiers had to be drawn to the insanitary conditions caused by leaving offal lying about instead of putting it into the cart provided for that purpose. The conditions are now improved.

Yours faithfully,

**JOHN TEMPLE ROBSON, F.S.I.,**

Inspector of Nuisances.

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ALNWICK:

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